

Memo to Offenders – “FLU”

Below is some general information that can help protect you during the upcoming flu season.

What is influenza (the “flu”)?

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious disease that is caused by a virus. It attacks the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu is different and often more severe than the common cold. Influenza usually comes on suddenly and most people will get better in about a week. Both the H1N1 and seasonal flu have the same symptoms that may include:

- Fever
- Body aches
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Nausea and Diarrhea

How is the Influenza Virus spread?

A person can spread the flu starting one day before he or she feels sick and then for another week or so after symptoms start. The flu is spread when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes, or speaks, sending droplets with flu virus into the air. Other people breathe in the virus through their nose or mouth. Influenza may also be spread when a person touches a surface that has flu virus on it – a door handle, for instance – and then touches his or her nose, eyes or mouth.

How to Prevent the Flu and its Spread:

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for 15-20 seconds. Wash after sneezing or coughing, any time you have body fluids on you, or after touching “high-touch” surfaces such as door knobs, hand rails, sink faucets, phones, intercom buttons, light switches, kiosks, etc.
- Cough or sneeze into a sleeve or tissue. Throw out tissues right away.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Clean “high-touch” surfaces frequently.
- Avoid sharing cups and silverware.
- Get the flu vaccine if it is offered to you. There will only be one flu vaccine this year that will include protection against 2009 H1N1 influenza.
- Report anyone with flu symptoms to staff.
- Offenders with influenza symptoms will be isolated until they are no longer infectious. (Isolation will be done in the least restrictive manner possible.)
- Offenders who have had close contact with a person with flu may also be isolated to make sure they do not get the flu and infect others. This is for everyone’s protection.
- Visitors will be turned away if they are sick for your protection. Please let your family know to reschedule a visit if they are sick before they travel to the facility to avoid a wasted trip.

What You Should Do If You Get the Flu

- Report your symptoms to staff immediately, so they can contact Health Services for you
- You should stay in your cell. Do not go to work, school, or recreation.
- Rest in bed.
- Drink plenty of liquids.
- You can take Tylenol (acetaminophen) or ibuprofen to lower your fever and decrease body aches, but do not take more than is recommended on the package.
- Your provider may offer you flu medication, but only if you are at risk of getting very ill.

If you have any additional questions you should kite the infection control nurse or your medical provider